

The Role of Product Involvement, Knowledge, and Perceptions in Consumer Purchase Behavior of Counterfeits: Perspective Islamic Country

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ABSTRACT

The current research investigated previous research about counterfeit branded products (CBP) and consumer behavior, focusing on the effects of product knowledge, product involvement, and consumers' perceptions of counterfeit branded products (CBP) as well as the interaction between these variables and consumer purchase intention of counterfeit branded products (CBP). We discussed five variables and the interaction among these variables (product knowledge, product involvement, counterfeit branded products, perception and purchase intention). The finding indicated a negative relationship between product knowledge and consumers' perceptions of CBP mediated the relationship between product involvement and purchase intention of CBP was mediated by consumer's perception of counterfeit branded products. Product involvement moderated the relationship between Consumer's Perceptions of counterfeit branded products and purchase intention of CBP.

KEY WORDS: product involvement; product knowledge; purchase behavior; counterfeit branded products.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although globalization has resulted in the lowering of international barriers, it has also created new opportunities for illegal trade. This study offers insights into non-deceptive counterfeiting by focusing on consumers in an Islamic country-namely, Iran. Despite the efforts on the part of international trade organizations to deter counterfeiting practices, product counterfeiting represents a growing problem for legitimate producers of global branded products ranging from pharmaceuticals to computer software and fashion merchandise. Within this paper, we attempt to take a fresh look at the demand side of counterfeiting. Therefore, this research measures consumers' perceptions of counterfeit branded products (CBP) as a product.

Counterfeit products are those bearing a trademark that is identical to, or indistinguishable from, a trademark registered to another party and that infringe upon the rights of the holder of the trademark [1, 2]. Counterfeits are "reproductions that appear identical to legitimate products in appearance, including packaging, trademarks, and labeling" [3]. This study used the following definition of a counterfeit product: products bearing a trademark that is identical to, or indistinguishable from, a trademark registered to another party and infringes on the rights of the holder of the trademark. [1]

Before providing a research overview, a clear categorization of counterfeit products is required. Counterfeiting appears in different forms one previous study.[4] divided counterfeits into six categories. The first category involves, counterfeiting as 100 percent copy to deceive consumers into the believing that it is the genuine article [5]. In the Second category, normally the customer is aware of the faked object, which and it is usually sold at a fraction of the original price, which we called "piracy". It is sometimes known as a 'non-deceptive fake' [5, 6]. Examples of pirated copies focus on well-known brands, Such as Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Gucci, Boss, and Guess. The third category refers to imitation brands or 'knock-offs' (imitators): they are not identical to the original, but are similar in substance, name, form, meaning or intent to an acknowledged and widely known product or service. The fourth includes grey product. Which are when the factories contracted by the brand manufacturers produce more quantity than the required quality and then sell them as overruns illegally [5]. The fifth category refers to, custom-made copies or super fake product brands, which are replicas of trademark designs of branded products made by legitimate craftsmen. In addition, raw materials are usually of good quality. The only item missing from the original is the emblem, or brand name [7]. Finally, counterfeits are also defined as the production of goods that are identically packaged, with the trademarks and labeling included so as to seeming to a consumer to be the genuine article [4]. Western researchers' definitions of counterfeit products by western researchers are generally associated with the infringement of trademarks, copyright, brand, labeling, and features all of which concern the appearance of the product [8]. Such studies fail to identify yet another category of counterfeit products that includes two types of transactions involving fake products, i. e., deceptive and non-deceptive counterfeiting [2, 9]. Deceptive counterfeiting represents situations in which consumers believe they have purchased a genuine product when in fact it is a fake. On Meanwhile, non-deceptive counterfeits refer to situations when consumers are fully aware (based on price, quality and the type of outlet from which the product is purchased) that they are buying a knock-off at the time of purchase. The

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choice of the non-deceptive counterfeit context is considered as important, as only under this circumstance might consumers' perceptions of counterfeits reflect their demand for these products.

Previous studies of consumers' attitude literature found that consumers in various countries differ in their attitudes toward counterfeits products, and those factors such as social influence, personality characteristics, and products attributes for instance, may help to explain such differences [3, 6]. Table1, it is clearly indicates that later researchers showed a greater interest in the study of counterfeiting from consumers' perspectives.

Table1. Counterfeit and related studies

Authors	Title	Sample	method	Finding
Penz and stottinger 2003	Branded counterfeit- what do they have in common?	Adult	Combined approach(survey and interview)	Consumers have a very clear picture of the benefit of brands over counterfeits
Veloutou and bran 2005	Consumer's attitudes regarding Non- Deceptive counterfeit brands in the UK and china	230 consumers aged UK and 296 in china	Survey	All respondents do not have a very high opinion of counterfeit brands; while chinese value them even less.
Bamossy and scammon 1985	Product counterfeiting: consumers and manufactures beware	38 consumers,US	Telephone survey	Consumers did seen to have clear ideas about the potential consequences of counterfeit goods
Cordell and Wongtada 1991	Consumer Reponses to counterfeit product	219 undergraduates	survey	Students selected the counterfeit product versus authentic one without regard for legality and public welfare
XUEMEI BIAN	The Role of Product Involvement, Knowledge, and Perceptions in Explaining Consumer Purchase Behaviour of Counterfeits: Direct and Indirect Effects	430 consumers aged 18 years old and above	survey	Results suggest that (1) perception is not a mediator of the effects of involvement /knowledge on purchase intention, (2) evidence of involvement as a moderator does not exist, (3) involvement/knowledge has no significant influence on counterfeit purchase intention.

Counterfeiting appears in different forms, primarily deceptive, non-deceptive and blur counterfeiting [10]. With deceptive or blur counterfeiting, the consumer is either not aware or unsure of the fact that he/she is purchasing a counterfeit rather than the original product and cannot be held accountable for this behavior. Thus, the current study limits its scope to non-deceptive counterfeiting, where consumers intentionally purchase counterfeits [2]. The choice of the non-deceptive counterfeit context is considered as important, as only under this circumstance might consumers' perceptions of counterfeits reflect their demand for these products. The limited number of studies exploring which searched for answers to why consumers knowingly purchase counterfeits focused primarily on variables such as perceived price benefit [11], product features [6], demographic variables [12], and social influences[3].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Product Involvement

Previous research concerning consumer behavior has emphasized the importance of the relationship between product involvement and product knowledge[13,14,15]. Product involvement reflects recognition that a particular product category may be more or less central to people's lives, their sense of identity, and their relationship with the rest of the world [16]. In essence, product involvement refers to the degree to which an individual is involved with a given product on a regular basis. In other words, product involvement is the perceived personal relevance of the product, based on needs, values or interest [17,18]. The effect of involvement interacts with product information and product knowledge,and researchers who study consumer behavior attribute a great deal of importance to the product involvement variable [15]. Studies have shown that product involvement can influence the decision making process regarding a product, the extent to which consumers will search for information about the product, the timing in adoption of the product, the manner in which the consumers' attitudes and preferences regarding the product are influenced, the consumers' perceptions of alternatives in the same product category and brand loyalty [19]. Higher levels of involvement should lead to better comprehension of information presented regarding a product and motivate consumers to produce more elaborate meanings about product information. Consumers with high involvement will be more likely than those with low involvement to attend to and comprehend product information [20].

Researchers studying consumer behavior attribute a great deal of importance to the product-involvement variable. Studies have shown that product involvement can influence the decision-making process regarding a product, the extent of the consumer's search for information about the product, the manner in which the consumer's attitudes and preferences regarding the product are affected, and the consumers' perceptions regarding the various alternatives to the same product category [19]. Furthermore, under high involvement

conditions, the buyer's decision-making processes are thought to proceed through extended decision-making, a series of sequential stages involving information search and evaluation of criteria [19].

Involvement with a product has been hypothesized to lead to a greater perception of attribute differences, perception of product importance, and greater commitment to brand choice. When a consumer buys a product, his/her attitude towards the product may differ from his/her attitude towards another product, depending on the category of the product [21].

2.2. Product Knowledge

The consumer's product knowledge has been the central issue of customer behavior study. In recent years there has been a substantial amount of research has focused on the role of product knowledge in various stages of consumer behavior. These studies concluding that the decision-making processes and strategies of consumers with significant product knowledge differ from those with less knowledge [22]. researchers have proposed that consumers with higher levels of product knowledge have better developed and more complex schemata, with well-formulated decision criteria. In the same vein, others (1998) have suggested that consumers with higher levels of product knowledge are more diagnostic and better informed than those who have lower levels of product knowledge. Therefore, the higher the level of product knowledge a consumer possesses, the less chance there is that he/she will generate evaluation bias. Given these findings, the current research argues that, in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting, consumers with higher levels of product knowledge are more likely to be able to evaluate CBP more accurately, due to their higher cognitive capacity. As a result, they should have less favorable perceptions of CBP. Previous research concerning consumer behavior has emphasized the importance of the relationship between product involvement and product knowledge [13, 14].

2.3. Consumers' Perception

The processes of consumer perception and decision making remain relatively complex phenomena despite the depth of research undertaken in the area[23].

Previous research suggests that it is perception that provides the grounds for purchasing decisions [10]. Meanwhile, price is not the sole determinant in consumers' decisions to purchase counterfeit goods. Other reasons that influence consumers' behavior include consumers' perception toward counterfeit products. The analysis of consumer perceptions and decision-making processes is therefore extremely important in order to understand consumer behavior, as it can help marketers more readily determine more readily what influences consumers' buying behavior [10]. According to the research, consumers choose to purchase CBP for a number of reasons as well as some barriers. This study focuses on the demand side of counterfeiting, examining consumer perceptions of non-deceptive counterfeiting in Iran.

In the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting, we predict that consumers with more positive perceptions of CBP are more likely to purchase the counterfeit version.

3. Conceptual Framework

This study focuses on the demand side of counterfeiting, examining consumers' perceptions of non-deceptive counterfeiting. Hence, against this background, we propose a conceptual model presented in Figure 1, and explore about five variables as well as the interactions among these variables (product knowledge, product involvement, CBP, perception, and purchase intention). We also attempt to show that consumers' perceptions may serve as a mediating link between product involvement/product knowledge and purchase intention, and that product involvement may be a moderator that affects the relationship between perceptions and purchase intention in the context of non-deceptive counterfeiting.

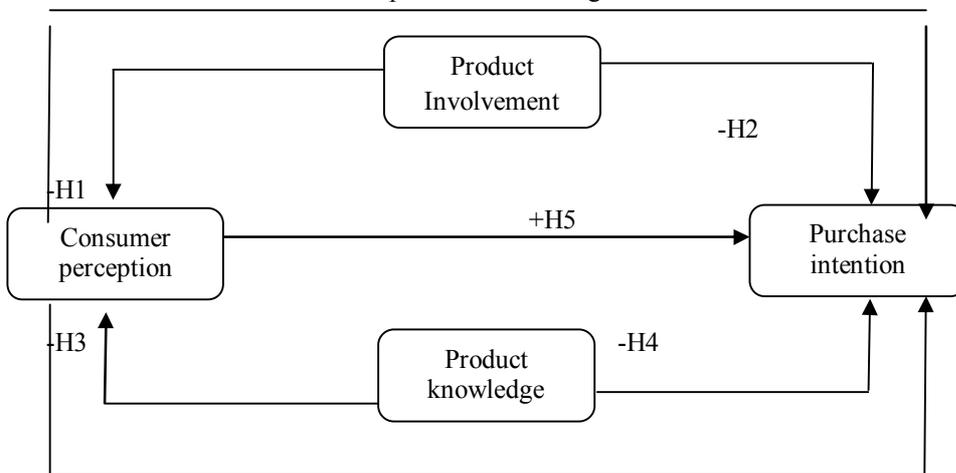


Figure1. Hypothesized Relationships between Product Involvement, Product Knowledge, Perception of CBP and Purchase Intention of CBP

3.1. Proposed Hypotheses Statement

Based on the structure model and the previously discussed overview of existing research on counterfeit purchasing and product knowledge and involvement, eight hypotheses are proposed.

H1: A negative relationship exists between product involvement and consumers' perceptions of CBP

H2: A negative relationship exists between product involvement and consumer purchase intention of CBP

H3: A negative relationship exists between product knowledge and consumers' perceptions of CBP.

H4: A negative relationship exists between product knowledge and consumer purchase intention of CBP.

H5: A positive relationship exists between consumers' perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP.

H6: The relationship between product involvement and purchase intention of CBP is mediated by consumers' perception of CBP.

H7: The relationship between product knowledge and purchase intention of CBP is mediated by consumers' perception of CBP.

H8: Product involvement moderates the relationship between consumers' perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP.

4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

4.1. Selected Brand

Counterfeit Adidas T-shirt was investigated in this research. The reasons for this choice are that the counterfeit versions of this brand are available. Consequently, only one brand of one product category (i.e., T-shirt) was examined in the current study.

4.2. Sample

In this research, we test our hypothesis among customers of Adidas T-shirts in city of Tehran in August 2011. The case studies involved students from Islamic Azad University in the city of Tehran (South branch, North branch, Olom Tahghighat, Central branch). This community was selected for several reasons. First, it enabled the study to present a more exact judgment about all of the variables related to the T-shirt top gather more information in this area. Second, it ensures accessibility to students during the distribution of questionnaires. Third, many previous studies examining counterfeit products used students as samples. Fourth, students can affect other people's decisions; they have mental autonomy based on Iran's cultural situation, competitions, and the situation in which students live. Fifth, high costs are involved in achieving ideal societies with different cultures. Finally, the sample ensures homogeneous relationships and prevents possible risks in comparisons to public samples. A total of 195 questionnaires were returned: 100 from males and 95 from females.

5. Measurement Model

The explanatory constructs in our model of purchase intention of CBP include product involvement, product knowledge, and perception. All involved constructs were measured using 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

For the purpose of this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to validate the proposed measurement model. CFA is a technique where it analyzes the extent to which the specification of the assigned factors matches the data collected in the study [24]. For this study, an initial series of CFA utilizing maximum likelihood estimation to test the measurement model were carried out for each of 10 latent variables (product involvement, product knowledge, purchase intention of CBP, excitement, competence, product attribute, functional attribute, satisfaction benefit, functional benefit, and image benefit). In the process, indicators with low factor loading were eliminated from the model to achieve optimum chi-square values for better model fit. In addition, modifications in the model were made based on the modification index and standard residuals to improve the model fit by dropping the candidate items (see Figure 2 for the results of the CFA).

Table2. Number of items, Cronbach's alpha, items deleted, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted (Measurement Model)

Variable	Number of items	Items deleted	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Product involvement	6	Q3,Q5,Q6,Q10	0.82	0.79	0.71
product knowledge	4	-	0.79	0.79	0.66
Purchase intention	4	Q46	0.85	0.89	0.81
Excitement	2	-	0.88	0.75	0.69
Competence	5	Q17,Q18,Q24	0.79	0.89	0.80
Product attribute	4	Q30	0.81	0.84	0.79
Functional attribute	3	-	0.75	0.81	0.74
Satisfaction benefit	4	-	0.88	0.88	0.80
Functional benefit	2	-	0.80	0.79	0.70
Image benefit	4	-	0.76	0.81	0.77

As Table 2 indicates, AVE for all the constructs is above 0.5, indicating the construct reliability for the model. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are both above the acceptable cut-off point of 0.6, ensuring the reliability of constructs in the measurement model.

With 1.121 degrees of freedoms, the model of this study yields a χ^2 value of 2735.24. Since a relative likelihood ratio of 3 or less is considered an acceptable fit and the value of χ^2/df for this model is 2.457, this measurement model is considered to have achieved an adequate fit. In addition other Goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) indicate that the measurement model fits the data quite well; GFI is 0.901 and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.921, both above the threshold of 0.90, indicating an acceptable model fit. RMSEA and SRMR are 0.064 and 0.051 respectively, which are below the 0.08 threshold, also showing good model fit.

5.1. Consumers' Perceptions of CBP as a Second-order Model

Consumers' perception of CBP has been recommended by theoretical structure as a second-order construct comprised of multiple dimensions. For statistical reasons, this has to be established by first, ensuring that the dimensions of this construct are indeed correlated with each other; the model then demonstrates the structural relationship between the dimensions. In the first step, the correlations of Consumers' perceptions of CBP dimensions are analyzed. The Goodness-of fit statistics report that the model fits the data very well (see the Table 3). In the second step, the structural relationships between the Consumers' perceptions of CBP dimensions are examined by comparing the proposed model(second-order construct) with two other alternative models namely, the first-order and one-factor model.

Table3. Comparative Fit Statistics & Indexes for Competing Models of Consumer's perceptions of CBP

	χ^2	df	P<0.001	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Second-order	346.617	132	0.000	2.626	0.903	0.952	0.063	0.052
First-order	349.512	130	0.000	2.689	0.901	0.937	0.068	0.057
One-factor	2761.136	135	0.000	20.452	0.387	0.430	0.288	0.267

Table 3 demonstrates that the worst overall fit is exhibited by the one-factor model; thus, the one-factor model is therefore rejected. When the second-order and first-order models are compared, it is seen that both of them yield near identical goodness-of-fit results. With a difference of 2 degree of freedoms (Δdf), the chi-square difference of $\Delta\chi^2=2.895$ is not significant ($p>0.001$). Since both models produced acceptable fit and there is no significant chi-square difference between the two, the proposed (second-order) model is preferable in this study. The main reason is that the second-order construct is suggested by theoretical literature as mentioned earlier. Hence, based on of priori theoretical status and construct validity of the scale, the second-order consumers' perceptions of CBP is chosen to be used in this study.

5.2. Structural Equation Model

In this part of the study, the hypothesized partially mediated model was tested for model fit. The result of the goodness-of-fit for the structural model shows a proper model fit (see Table 4). In the next step, a competing model strategy was used to ensure that the hypothesized partially mediated model not only has an acceptable model fit, but also performs better than the alternative models. A sequence of tests was then conducted to determine which has the best overall fit to the empirical data. First, the full mediation model (Model 1) with only indirect relationship between independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) was tested against the partially mediated model as the hypothesized theoretical model (Model 2), which included both direct and indirect relationships between IVs and DV. Next, the non-mediated model (Model 3) was also tested against the hypothesized partially mediated model. Since the full mediation (Model 1) and non-mediation (Model 3) were nested within the hypothesized partially mediated model (Model 2), the chi-square (χ^2) difference statistics ($\Delta\chi^2$) test was appropriate for alternative model comparison. Table 5 displays the results of chi-square difference and several overall fit indices.

If the $\Delta\chi^2$ tests were significant and the χ^2 values for partial mediation were significantly lower than the full mediation and non-mediation models, it would offer support for the hypothesized partially mediated model. As Table 5 demonstrates, the $\Delta\chi^2$ for both comparisons are statistically significant. Thus, the findings supported that the partially mediated model has a better fit compared to both full mediation and non-mediation models.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

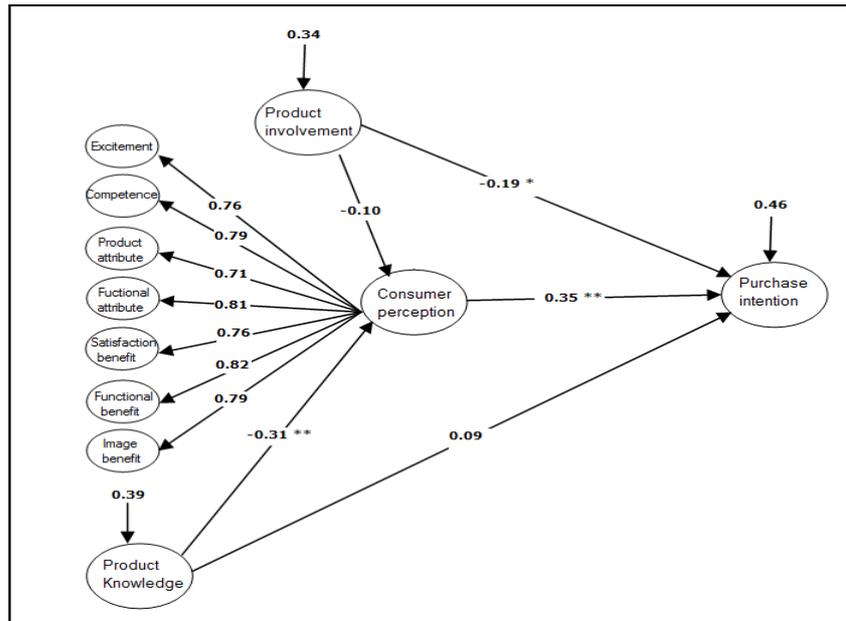
Hypothesis testing was conducted based on the partially mediated model depicted in Figure. Hypothesis 1 was concerned with the effect of product involvement on consumers' perceptions of CBP. As Figure 2 indicates that the path that connecting these two, yields a non-significant coefficient value of -0.10 ($p>0.05$) which means the finding cannot support the first hypothesis of this study. The link between product involvement and consumer purchase intention of CBP, as shown in Figure2, generated a coefficient value of -0.19 and is

significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, it can be inferred that product involvement has a significant negative effect on consumer purchase intention of CBP, supporting the second hypothesis of this study.

Table 4. Overall Fit Indices of the Hypothesized Structural Model

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model	320	1	2.89	0.90	0.921	0.069	0.058
	5.010	109		1			

Hypothesis 3 states that there is a negative relationship exists between product knowledge and consumers perceptions of CBP. With a coefficient path of -0.31 ($p < 0.01$) between these two variables, it can be said that this hypothesis is also supported by data. However, as shown in Figure2, the hypothesis 4 is not supported by the data; that is so because the coefficient value for route from product knowledge to consumer purchase intention of CBP is not significant at the 0.05 level.



* $p < 0.01$
 ** $p < 0.05$

Figure2. Hypothesized Structural Model

As Figure 2 indicates, the coefficient value that is produced between consumers’ perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP is 0.35. This path is also considered significant ($p < 0.01$) and, as such, supports hypothesis 5. Moreover, consumers’ perceptions of CBP play a mediating role between the independent variables (i.e. product involvement and product knowledge) and dependent variable (consumers’ purchase intention of CBP). This role can be examined regarding direct, indirect, and total effect of variables, as shown in Table 6.

Table5. Model Comparison for Mediation Effects Testing

Fit Index	Model Comparison 1		Model Comparison 2	
	Partial Mediation	Full Mediation	Partial Mediation	Non-Mediation
χ^2	3205.010	3512.110	3205.010	3892.960
χ^2/df	2.89	3.121	2.89	4.33
GFI	0.901	0.890	0.901	0.654
CFI	0.921	0.902	0.921	0.780
RMSEA	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.112
Chi-square Difference	$\Delta\chi^2 = 307.1, p < .01$		$\Delta\chi^2 = 687.95, p < .01$	

Hypothesis 6 concerns the mediating role of consumers’ perceptions of CBP between product involvement and purchase intention of CBP. Although a significant path exists between consumers’ perceptions of CBP (mediator) and consumers’ purchase intention of CBP (dependent variable), no significant relationship exists between product involvement and the mediator, the mediation role of consumers’ perceptions of CBP in hypothesis 6 is not supported. However, as Table 6 indicates, the mediation role of consumers’ perceptions of CBP between product knowledge and consumer purchase intention of CBP is supported by the data. Significant

relationships exist between product knowledge and consumers' perceptions of CBP (-0.31) and between consumers' perceptions of CBP and consumer purchase intention of CBP (-0.35); thus, it can be inferred that a significant indirect link (-0.11) exists between the independent variable (product knowledge) and the dependent variable (consumers' purchase intention of CBP) through the mediator (consumers' purchase intention of CBP).

To examine the hypothesis 8 regarding the moderating effect of product involvement between consumers' perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP, a multiple group analysis was performed. Based on the scores on product involvement, five groups were extracted and relationship the between consumers' perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP was examined between these five groups. The chi-square for each model was obtained and compared for significant differences. As the $\Delta\chi^2$ for these groups were statistically significant, so it can be concluded that product involvement has a moderating effect on the relationship between consumer's perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP, supporting the hypothesis 8.

Table6. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Hypothesized Model

Independent Variables	Endogenous Variables						Mediation effects
	consumer's perceptions of CBP			consumer purchase intention of CBP			
	Direc t effects	Indirec t effects	Total effects	Direct effects	Indirec t effects	Total effects	
product involvement	-0.10	0.0	-0.10	-0.19 *	0.0	-0.19	Not Supported
product knowledge	0.31**	0.0	0.31**	0.09	0.11**	-0.42	Supported

7. Conclusions

This study is to investigated product involvement, product knowledge and perception and purchase intention in deceptive counterfeiting. We examined the relationships among the product involvement, product knowledge, and perception of CBP on purchase intention; and we also investigated indirect effects-namely, whether relations between product involvement/product knowledge and purchase intention of CBP are mediated by consumers' perceptions of CBP, and whether effects of consumers' perceptions of CBP on purchase intention are moderated by product involvement. A negative relationship was demonstrated between product knowledge and consumers perceptions of CBP. The relationship between product involvement and purchase intention of CBP was mediated by consumers' perception of CBP. Product involvement moderated the relationship between consumers' perceptions of CBP and purchase intention of CBP.

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